

IT WAS LOVE!

BY – DEEKSHA RAINA



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PART - I

FINDING US

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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This is an original fiction piece and thus the characters are fictional. If by chance someone else claims resemblance to any character, it is purely coincidental.

I want to thank all my reader(s) who have taken out time to read my novel. Please feel free to comment and share your feedback.
:)

Thank you Sakshi for being my first audience and for encouraging me to move ahead! Love you.

Thanks a ton Mrs. Jewela Adams, for being my first contact and my connect to my dreams! Thank you for inspiring me to improve and enhance myself with each passing day, in a better hue! :D

Last but it the least, thank you Mumma and Papa. For introducing me to books and for being my support system always.

PROLOGUE

Cathleen~~~

She looked into the brown eyes and drowned into their depths....

This was how Cathleen described love, to be among the crowd yet to be with a single person simultaneously. Yes, if someone would ask her for the reality of her thoughts, she would point out her grandparents, how she was a witness to their unbounded & unending love for each other.

Chapter 1

West Hampstead, London, UK

Joel ~~~

I wanted to throw away that tongue in cheek alarm clock, always breaking into my dreams at precisely 6 o'clock, always the same time. I loved dreams, day dreaming was my hobby. Many a times I had to go through the embarrassment of it dragging my poor single mother into the shackles of my punishment. I knew from the very beginning that the teachers at Joseph Field School were shrewd, giving me detentions which I could never have completed, were it not for my literate yet destitute mother. You see, I was a rare child. Funnily enough, I never wanted to be one! I had that bad habit of not listening to the teacher consequences of which were present in my notebooks. Those red marks were like scars imprinted onto my being. I must have done something horrible to be at the end of the teacher's wrath, though I could never recall my wrongdoing! It was not until in the 7th standard when I was made aware of my iniquity although she never made it look like my vice. She said that it was rare and I was somewhat special. " Special! Who would want to be unique in this way? Certainly, I agree I had always bargained

with Lord for chocolate and such delights but never did I recall adding this speciality in my delicacies.

Lucy~~~

My existence came into being on a rainy day, second of September. From the very beginning, I was bouncing on the lap of luxury, from silken and pure cotton to sophisticated crepe and georgettes, I was bundled in all fabrics. As I grew, my closet occupied more space showing off my bundle of clothes and huge piles of shoes ranging from Louis Vuitton to Calvin Klein; my wardrobe was a living example of a Supremely sophisticated and luxurious life. But as they say, every ending leads to a new beginning! This was proved too true in my case when my mother passed away and so did the luxuries of my life. Before I could come out and hold myself together, my father, I learnt had already started ahead! It was no later than 3 months when I, as he put it, was fortunate enough to get the love of a mother again. I must have been around 10 years of age & this incident had a strong mark/ impression on my personality. It's been 3 years since then, I go to a co-ed school and have demoted from a bungalow to a 3-room shell cottage. My appetite has digressed from a 4-course meal to a 2-time bread and butter meal with milk in dessert. Sometimes when my lady luck smiles, I get to have my favourite cheesecake in dessert. My wardrobe malfunction took place and all my lovely crepes, silk and georgettes given to me by my angelic mother were auctioned

along the 50 other items of my memorabilia. I was reduced to having a pair of hand me down clothes and worn out shoes. The course of my life had taken a 180-degree turn! Where I had been studying in the top established school 1 year back & now I find myself in this suffocated, pale 4-walled classroom. It was a new beginning, as my father said to me each morning. The only consolation in this depressing, unwanted beginning was my mother's diary which I somehow had managed to steal away from my step mom's prying eyes. It was my nightly ritual before going to bed. I felt closer to my mother than ever before.

Chapter 2

Lucy~~~

He was rather quieter than I thought. And he was looking everywhere except his hands, which were red and bleeding from the so many whips received. Mr. Hoffman held a powerful grip on his cane, his eyes were full of fury and his cheeks were red. I shifted my focus from the ruthless teacher to Joel. That was his name. Before I could venture any further, I sensed that the room had suddenly gone quiet. I sat up erect and heard the 10th detention being served by Joel in 2 weeks. I don't understand why the staff at J.F school always commanded him to write along the lines. Clearly, it didn't do him any good, anybody could see it. Why bother then?

I knew it. I was just tired. No other reason to credit my fainting. Tiredness. Or malnutrition?

And then I saw him. His hands folded in a pleading manner, his head bent down., his body trembling under the hands of some big, burly grotesque man with large, handlebar moustache.

There was no rule to my reaching home before dark. You might think it to be crude, but trust me, I could never replace money

for the prime topic of concern in my family. And so, I followed, hidden by the dark, the snow swallowing my footsteps.

Joel, as I had figured already was living in a 1 room kitchen 'space'. I call it space because it didn't actually constitute a house. I realized the stark reality of being in such a poverty ridden state. His eyes were blood red. His nose had a stain. His shirt was wet. Simply put, he had been crying, real hard. I couldn't see him thus. I felt something pull at my heart's strings. I went over to him and put out a hand on his back gently. He looked up and turned. I saw astonishment accompanied with slow recognition and then fresh tears clouding his face. I did what I thought was best at that time. I hugged him.

Joel~~~

"Stand up! U ungrateful dog!" Mr. Hoffman shouted even though I was sitting right under his nose. I had misspelled and scored another zero, adding to my collection. As I stood up, I could see him sharpening his cane. Lucy was looking at me with a strange expression on her face. Maybe it was pity. Suddenly I was subjected to pain, with horror I realized that Mr Hoffman had finally put the cane to use. On me.

I reached the room at the end of the road. It looked more forlorn that ever. Suddenly I was running at top speed, my unkempt hair flying in the dusty air. I threw open the door and...

I woke up feeling dizzy. Our principal Mr. James Howard was standing at the door talking to my landlord Mr Timothy. Mr Timothy, god bless him was a kind soul who had let in me & my poor mother rent free. As soon as Mr James had gone off in his posh black colour Mercedes Benz, I jumped out of the bed and

ran up to Tim. He saw me, broke into a sympathetic smile and put his hands on my shoulders. "my dear Joel boy, I am sad for ya but happy for ya mother. She is better off there", he said pointing to the sky. "Don't you worry child, she will be keeping an eye on you from heaven. N now that she's with dear lord, you see soon good things and opportunities will come to ya. Just remember this". He thus ended his speech looking straight in my eyes. I folded my hands, looked at him and mumbled a thanks. Tim patted me again and was gone in his 2-seater vehicle. It seemed like a few minutes had passed when I felt a smooth and gentle palm on my shoulder. I turned around. She was wearing her school dress; her hair was tied in a plait. I simply looked at her in astonishment, for, not even one reason occurred to me why anyone would come to this dilapidated place. Then something happened. She hugged me. I was taken aback. No one, not even my mother had done this to me. She would always kiss me on the cheek and pat me on my back. Thinking of my mother brought fresh tears into my eyes. I hugged her back tightly. I cried my heart out.

Chapter 3

Joel ~ ~ ~

It was a little after twilight. The sky was a shade of darkish blue, the stars shining upon us. We were sitting on the wooden, dilapidated bench which having lost its chocolate brown colour was more of an addition to the forlorn situation. I don't know when it happened, but after wiping my tears dry and calming myself, I suddenly found myself holding hands with Lucy. We hadn't talked one bit, just sitting there holding hands and swallowing the darkness. Lucy told me that the star that was shining brightly just above us was my mother smiling down at me. I believed her.

Lucy ~ ~ ~

Silence can say a thousand words. I believed it. We were sitting together, holding hands, hadn't said a word to each other yet it was as if we had said and understood everything we had in our hearts. Till yesterday he was sharing his life, dreams, food with

his mother and today he was the only one to be taking in those mouthfuls of food, wondering how and who will be by His side When he fulfils those dreams. I knew it. I understood it. The pain. The pain of losing someone who is the closest to your heart. I don't know how it happened. All of a sudden while I helped him calm down, I found myself holding hands with Joel. And there we sat for what seemed like eternity.

Our hands entwined, we look towards the sky, the stars illuminating the dark space with their brightness. We spot the giant Ursa major and the brave Orion. I find the brightest star and he gets happy to know that it's his mother looking over at him from above. I believe that he believes me.

Chapter 4

Lucy~~~

I hadn't expected it and found myself to be pleasantly surprised by the sudden concern shown by my father as I entered in late. He had been sitting there on the couch looking towards the door, not batting his eye even once. Within a span of 10 mins I was seated next to my father and catching up on old times. He seemed depressed about our current affairs. I was shocked when he informed me that he will be picking me up at lunch. Even the prospect of sharing a meal with my father seemed so unlikely and unthinkable that I hesitated, just once before giving into his request. He patted me and gave me my goodnight kiss, it seemed for a moment, as if the old days were back! But stark reality forced its way into my thoughts when my step mother barged in and sweetly put on a controlled hand on my father's shoulder, asking him to 'let me sleep in peace'. The fact that my father was now in the league of those henpecked husbands brought a new set of questions and concern which weren't letting

me sleep. Finally, I shifted the unending whys and hows and what-ifs into the back of my mind {my mind palace} and dozed off to sleep!

Joel~~~

We were still holding hands when I had walked Lucy back to her home. As I reached her street, where I had expected to find a grand mansion, there stood a small cottage. I was surprised but refrained from commenting. She was lucky, I later pondered, to have been blessed with the love of her parents however small the house was!

Whereas, as I neared my house, the feeling of being left alone and far away from everyone crept yet again. My body wanted to turn away from the dark house, which was staring at me as if mocking me but my feet moved involuntarily forward. Suddenly a light shone and I saw Tim coming over towards me.

"Where have u been? I have been searching this and the next street for hours! " Tim's concern and worry startled me and I couldn't think of a word to utter. "I know its hard son, but then life ain't a piece of cake! You gotta strive and work towards a better tomorrow. Come now young man, what did u think? I wouldn't let u live in this damp depressing place! Of course, u'll be coming with me and live with me and ma old mum. Don't you worry child, you are not alone."

Saying this, Tim kept a loose hand on my shoulder and smiled at me, asking me to join him. I was dumbfounded. Even more, I was humbled and relieved that somehow God was helping me out in some way or the other.! I packed a few clothes, some

necessities and some memories in my backpack and holding hands I looked forward to a new tomorrow!

Chapter 5

Joel~~~

It's said every end is a new beginning. This was proving to be too true in my case. After my mother's funeral, arranged by Tim, I was shifted to a new place, a new house and had a room to myself! Where I had been living in a 1 room kitchen, I found myself in a sprawling, 4 poster bed and a huge open kitchen! Old ma had made the bed comfortable with soft pillows and a mattress. She had advised me to take some rest and here I was, lying on my bed, looking at the canopy above, surprised at the turn of fate, at the flip of the coin!

Lucy~~~

It has been a week since Joel's mum left for abode. A lot has happened and equations have changed, for better. My father, as promised did come to pick me up. As I hadn't expected him to keep up to his promise, I was pleasantly shocked. He took me to our favourite fishing spot and we chatted for what seemed an hour! He asked all about school, about my subjects and my friends. Something, which he hadn't done in years! I told him everything. And I told him about Joel.

When I saw him enter the class, I had expected to find a sad, looming boy with drooping shoulders, however, I was in for a surprise. He came in as tidy as ever, with a slight smile playing on his face, his eyes searching and scanning all over the room.

Suddenly his eyes found mine and we both looked into each other's eyes, he came forward his eyes never leaving mine. It was only after 5 mins or so, when I realized that he had been standing in front of me holding out his hand towards me. I shook his hand and we both knew, that in that handshake lay a promise of togetherness for a lifetime!

However, changed Joel's physical appearance might be, he was still lacking behind in his subjects. It became a cause of worry for Tim, as he couldn't fathom why the boy was still behind, even after all the hard work. One day, while talking to Tim, I got to know that Joel hadn't been home since the previous night. He was serving detention. It was then that I decided to take this matter upon myself. I promised Tim that I will help Joel out of this mess. I scanned his notebooks and surfed the net. I searched the dictionary and flipped over the pages. After staying up for two whole nights I realized with shock that Joel was not at fault. In fact, he was the victim. I concluded that he was suffering

from Dyslexia, a rare disorder which had led to this. My shock was replaced with fear and fear got replaced with anguish and pain. Anguish at how much pain Joel must be in. At how much he must be suffering from inside! Being clueless and not being able to help himself, he must be feeling so lonely and hollow from inside! As I was rushing towards the detention centre I prayed feverently that the faculties at our school hadn't robbed him of his innocence and purity of heart while giving him endless detentions.

Joel~~~

To say that my lady luck smiled on me, would be an understatement. Never! I say never could I have imagined myself being blessed with so much love and tended to with care! Tim and Old MA, after taking me in proved to be the best guardians I could ever ask for! Uncle Tim, as I started addressing him as, was like the father I never had! Playing ball, teaching me to fish and taking me to some sight-seeing were some of the activities we indulged in. Old ma loved me with all her heart. Making delicious meals, teaching me to bake some amazing desserts and teaching various instruments, she literally took me under her wing. They didn't have any child hence loved me as their own. I did try hard at all of them because I wanted them to feel proud of me. And I did succeed. I was particularly skilled at playing the guitar and cooking. Baking in particular held more of my interest and I indulged in it with more passion. Once I baked a mouth-watering chocolate mousse, so as to express my gratitude and love for my new life and my new

beginning. However, not all was well on the academic front. Try as hard as I could, the scars were still there in my notebooks. Even Old ma and Uncle Tim were confused. Even after putting in hours, we couldn't fathom the cause of such pain.

I knew that they were worried. And I did try to work harder at it. I even asked Lucy and she also would sit with me and help me in English and mathematics. But try as I might, somehow, I would always end up messing my papers! One such dictation resulted in yet another detention for me. I hated them. The faculties especially Mr. Hoffman would always end up using his cane on me and so many times I could find blood oozing from my palms. Lucy would always be there for me, always bandaging the wound and applying some cream on my hands so as to ease the pain. While doing so, I would often find tears welled up in her eyes. The fact that she was crying because of me, hurt me even more. The only relief from these punishments was the fact that they were always the same. To write I will work hard approximately 100 times. And I was glad in a way, because then I didn't have to worry about any new words or sentences!

It had been over a night now, I was still in detention. Yes! You guessed it right. There was a difference this time. But only in numbers. I had to write the same line now 1000 times! God! How my hand hurt! I had just 2-4 lines more to go when I heard the loud voice of Uncle Tim. He was calling out my name and as soon as he saw me, he hugged me close and cried. Simply cried. Because I had missed him I started crying as well. I had terribly missed his huge muscular arms and his cologne. I had missed his jovial smile and twinkling eyes. I repeated his name over and over again as I cried. Finally, after a long 10 mins, we stood facing each other, drying each other's tears while he vowed to

take me out of the building forever and away from this ruthless pain which was inflicted upon me. I gladly accepted it.

Chapter 6

Joel~~~

I was back in the familiar surroundings, sitting between my angels as I feasted on a sumptuous meal of rice laden with a platter full of mushrooms, spinach, corn and cottage cheese. For my homecoming, Old ma had prepared a special dessert of blueberry cheese cake, my favourite. Old ma had come rushing

down the stairs and hugged me tightly, crying my name out and thanking lord over and over again! I felt over whelmed and promised her to never make her cry again. She just smiled and brushed a kiss over my forehead.

Uncle Tim was telling me about my new study schedule. Both Old ma and he had decided to provide home schooling for me and I was happier with the news! Though I would miss spending time with Lucy, but I could try make it up for her. And I felt she would also share my news with much happiness. Lucy had, slowly became my ma's favourite. She would always be welcomed at home at any time. And we would look forward to her, especially me.

I was thinking of the famous Guess Who game that we all had played one afternoon after school. I and ma had made a variety of desserts ranging from chocolate cookies and chocolate almond banana split to red velvet cupcakes and mango cheesecake among others. Uncle Tim and Lucy had to taste them and guess which were the ones baked by me! I remember Lucy bring surprised and totally astonished at knowing that I was the chef except for the blueberry cheese cake. I loved it when she savoured each bite closing her eyes and licking her lips in approval. As I was smiling to myself, we heard the doorbell ring and somebody knocked hard on our door. Uncle Tim rose and opened the door. I was astonished to find Lucy's father Mr. Nick Watson standing at the door. I had met him only twice before. At five feet ten he towered over me and made me feel a coward. However, he would smile easily and talked in a humorous manner, dispelling my thoughts of his being a hostile man. He had even appreciated me for my baking skills! But now He was breathing rather quickly, wiping the sweat from his forehead. He gave me the impression of someone running at full

speed. In his hand was clutched a letter which surprisingly had Uncle Tim's name scrawled on it. I immediately recognized the handwriting as Lucy's. And suddenly my head was full of thoughts wavering around Lucy. Had something happened to her? Was she ok? Why had her father come running at this time of the night? Was it anything serious? Before I could contemplate any further, Mr. Watson opened his mouth to speak. And took my breath away.

Lucy~~~

After being informed that Uncle Tim had come and taken away Joel forever from the school I was glad and felt lighter in my heart. Though I would deeply miss his presence in school but I was happy for him. Now that I knew what the problem was, I knew what Uncle Tim did was beneficial for Joel as well. I had almost decided to rush to their home when I realized that it was already late and though they would welcome me into their beautiful abode anytime but father must be waiting for me. He had told me that he had some important news to share with me and it was necessary for me to be at home early enough. When he told me this a number of thoughts came uninvited into my head. Was step mom trying to separate him from me? Was he leaving me and going away? Would he also die like mother? When this horrible thought came I chastised myself for such negativity. It was only that I had got my father's love back after so long that I feared losing him again. And hence I decided to meet Uncle Tim and Ma the next morning and rushed back to

my father. I smiled to myself thinking about Old Ma. She was my friend and the mother I so wanted. She loved me so much and taught me new, inspiring ways to live and enjoy life! I would sometimes envy Joel for his new life! But the next moment I would scold myself for thinking like this. After so many trials, Joel deserved to be happy.

As I reached back home, stopping for a second, catching my breath I saw the front door open and my step mother walked out. She had her hands and arms full with suitcases and when she saw me her face convulsed into an annoyed scowl. Nothing new about that, I was just grateful for the fact that she had never raised a hand on me. Maybe because of my father, I suspected.

"About time you are back! Must be out lurking with those petty low-down bunch!". That was how she would describe Joel and his lovely family. Because I hated it, I would find ways to irritate her some more. Father, I knew didn't like her version either, but as usual would stay silent when it concerned his wife's choice of words. Ignoring her completely, I crossed the porch and went in the kitchen. I was surprised to find the house bereft of the scarce items and things, if any left after my mother's death. I wondered for a moment there, whether that hag was finally leaving me and my father and taking with her all the house items as well. I could live with that, in fact I could live with anything except her! But that bubble of joy soon burst when I saw my father coming down the stairs with another suitcase in his hand. When he saw me, he put down his suitcase and took me by my hand. We sat down on the couch and finally he shared with me the important news. And it took every ounce of struggle in me to not break down in front of him.

Vote of Thanks!

Hello Readers! We have come to the end of Part 1 of Joel and Lucy's journey! I hope that you enjoyed my novel so far ☐ any comments and feedbacks are most welcome.

I promise to publish the next part of my novel asap! Thank you for reading and enjoying my novel- IT WAS LOVE.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR -

A writer in the making, Deeksha Raina pursued her major in computer sciences and engineering with a minor in French. Having completed her graduation in July 2017, she is now working in an MNC. True to her name, she had initiated her first thoughts at the age of 15 and from then on, there has been no looking back. An avid reader, she had her first encounter with books at the mere age of 4 years. Publishing her first novel at the age of 22, she hopes to make it big and achieve her dream of being a successful author someday!

Till then, it's the journey which she is enjoying.

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